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08 June 2004

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Indonesia: East Java native religion called Aliran Kepercayaan or Kepercayaan Kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, aka Pangistu; its status and treatment of its members by Muslim fundamentalists (2003-June 2004)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

According to the *International Religious Freedom Report 2003 (IRFR 2003)*, while they make up less than 0.6 per cent of the population, a number of Indonesians in Java, Kalimantan, and Papua follow traditional faith practices commonly referred to as Aliran Kepercayaan (18 Dec. 2003, Sec. I). Moreover, the *IRFR 2003* described Kepercayaan as an animistic meditation-based spiritual path, as opposed to a religion, many followers of which are also adherents of one of the five major faiths-Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism-sanctioned by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (18 Dec. 2003, Sec. I). Nevertheless, while the government allows Kepercayaan followers to practice their faith, they are required to register their faith with the Department of National Education housed within the Ministry of Education (*IRFR 2003* 18 Dec. 2003, Sec. II).

Muhamad Ali, an academic and author based at the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) in Jakarta, stated, in a November 2003 *Jakarta Post* news article, that in addition to the five official religions, the practice of Aliran Kepercayaan is also recognized by the national government (28 Nov. 2003). While Ali noted that a citizen's religious affiliation should be indicated on their National Identity Card (KTP), the author was unclear as to whether Kepercayaan followers would have their tradition-based religion officially recognized when applying for a KTP (*Jakarta Post* 28 Nov. 2003). Nevertheless, Ali did mention that followers of minority religions such as Confucianism might be denied a KTP if they refused to indicate one of the five major religions in their application (*ibid.*). Noting that the KTP is an important document that is needed for such matters as employment, Ali also stated that members of minority religions face "de facto" discrimination by government bureaucracy such as the Civil Registration Office, and have limited access to jobs in the civil service and limited admission to public universities (*ibid.*).

Country Reports 2003 noted that the state's civil registration system persisted in its discrimination against members of minority religions such as Kepercayaan (25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1c). For example, on 9 April 2003, 100 Kepercayaan worshippers from West Java presented a complaint to the Indonesian human rights commission, Komnas HAM (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1c). In their complaint, the Kepercayaan group explained that they could not register births or marriages, and their children also faced difficulties at school because of their religious affiliation (*ibid.*).

An April 2004 *Religious Freedom World Report*, prepared by the United States-based International Coalition for Religious Freedom, noted that although the practice of Aliran Kepercayaan is permitted by the state, all Indonesians are compelled to become a member of one of the five official religions (4 Apr. 2004). Refusal to do so could result in difficulty in obtaining official documents such as the national identity card (*Religious Freedom World Report* 4 Apr. 2004).

Information about the treatment of Aliran Kepercayaan worshippers by Muslim fundamentalists could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003. 25 February 2004. "Indonesia." United States Department of State. Washington, DC. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27771pf.htm>> [Accessed 3 June 2004]

International Religious Freedom Report 2003 (IRFR 2003). 18 December 2003. "Indonesia." United States Department of State. Washington, DC. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2003/23829pf.htm>> [Accessed 31 May 2004]

Jakarta Post . 28 November 2003. Muhamad Ali. "The Politics of Religious Pluralism." (Dialog)

Religious Freedom World Report [Falls Church, Virginia]. 4 April 2004. International Coalition for Religious Freedom. <<http://www.religiousfreedom.com/wrpt/asiapac/indonesia.htm>> [Accessed 1 June 2004]

Additional Sources Consulted

Unsuccessful attempts in contacting two oral sources.

Internet sites: Amnesty International, Center for Religious Freedom (Freedom House), CIA World Factbook, Europa World, Human Rights Watch, Indonesian Human Rights Network, International Institute for Asian Studies, Joglosemar Online, Minority Rights Group International, Overview of World Religions, Tapol, World News Connection/Dialog.

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